

## Budget takes center stage

**By Rep. Polly Bukta**  
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— Last week, the Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) reduced our revenue estimates. Although it was expected, the estimates are just the latest evidence that middle-class Iowa families, employers and state revenues are continuing to feel the pinch of the deepening national recession.

The estimate for the current fiscal year (2009) was reduced by an additional \$81.7 million. We anticipated this reduction because of the national economic recession. Working with Governor Culver, we've already taken steps to keep the budget balanced, as required by state law. We are now working with over \$165 million in reductions and adjustments. The assembly is taking the steps necessary over the next few weeks to make sure our budget stays in the black as the fiscal year winds down.

The REC estimates also pushed our budget work for next year (Fiscal Year 2010) to the front burner this week. The House Appropriations Chair had to reduce our budget targets again. Now most budget subcommittees are working with about 4.1 percent or \$250 million less than last year. We're getting our first look at the budget bills as they get approved by subcommittees. It's very clear that these latest cuts will cause more pain throughout the state.

Despite the revenue decline, we remain committed to a fiscally responsible state budget that avoids raising taxes on middle class families.

### Foreclosure prevention

Over the last two weeks, we've been working to enact a foreclosure prevention package that will help struggling middle class families. The goal is to provide more support for Iowans who are facing foreclosure as well as ensure that lenders are both accountable and transparent.

House File 375, the Mortgage Broker and Banker Accountability Act, was approved this week. It prohibits — Brokers or bankers from misleading borrowers or making false statements; charging fees for loans that don't materialize; and accepting any undisclosed compensation for their services.

Senate File 364, requires information about the Iowa Mortgage Foreclosure Hotline be given by lenders to homeowners at the first step of the foreclosure process.

House File 706, which was approved last week, prohibits home foreclosures on military reserve members or their families while serving on active duty.

All Iowans facing foreclosure or default on their home mortgage should call the Iowa Mortgage Help Hotline at 877-622-4866. It's a free, confidential call that can help Iowans avoid foreclosure and take advantage of federal financial assistance announced by President Obama last month.

### Some good economic news

There was some good economic news for our state this week. With extra federal stimulus dollars, Iowa is preparing for the largest road construction season in our history. There will be over \$1 billion allocated for various projects. Contractors are looking for workers and have created a Web site with job openings at [www.agciajobs.com](http://www.agciajobs.com).

Citing our "smart and productive workforce" as well as support for renewable energy technology, a California company is building a new plant in Iowa that will create 130 new "green" jobs. The company will use corn stalks and cobs to create an organic fertilizer.

Rep. Polly Bukta, D-Clinton, has been a member of the Iowa House of Representatives since 1997. She represents District 26.

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